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C O N F I D E N T I A L BRATISLAVA 001010

SIPDIS

FOR EUR/NCE AND EUR/OHI JBECKER

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KIRF](#) [KPAO](#) [SOCI](#) [UP](#) [BO](#) [LO](#)

SUBJECT: SLOVAKIA POLITICAL ROUNDUP, DECEMBER 23, 2005

REF: BRATISLAVA 979

Classified By: CDA a.i. Lawrence R. Silverman for Reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

MUD-SLINGING GETS TASKED OUT FOR COMING ELECTIONS

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[11.](#) (C) NGO Obciansko-demokraticka mladez (Citizens' Association for Democratic Youth) has made a deal with center-right parties SDKU and KDH to act as their official mud-slingers / Smer fact-checkers in the upcoming parliamentary campaign. During the 2002 campaign, Obciansko-demokraticka mladez ran ads encouraging a vote for any of three right-wing parties, in addition to a negative campaign comparing Smer leader Robert Fico to the former Prime Minister Vladimir Meciar. In the 2006 national election campaign they will focus exclusively on tarnishing Fico and Smer. Maros Kemeny, Chairman of Obciansko-demokraticka mladez, told Poloff that the goal was to allow SDKU and KDH to focus on positive campaigns, thus keeping open the option of a post-election coalition with Smer. Obciansko-demokraticka mladez's campaign will be aimed at Smer's mostly young supporters and will heavily feature web-based cartoons and ads, stickers and "outreach" by attractive young people in Slovak bars. The first web-based cartoon should run in late January, and will parody Fico's 1992 trip to Cuba, during which he allegedly called Cuban leader Fidel Castro his "political idol."

IRAQ MINI-SERIES MAY HAVE POLITICAL MOTIVES

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[12.](#) (C) Kemeny, who also serves as the Director of the Communications Bureau at the Ministry of Defense, said that a three-part mini-series produced by the MoD and emphasizing the good work Slovak troops are doing in Iraq (clearing mines, protecting school children, helping to stabilize society) will begin airing on the popular Markiza television station in January. Kemeny said the mini-series is part of an effort to gain support for troops. If it succeeds, he will be able to use Robert Fico's publicly expressed opposition to the war in Iraq against the Smer party in the upcoming elections. (COMMENT: This "dual use" of the Iraq mini-series is notably in its decidedly political goal for a publicly-funded program. END COMMENT)

NATIONAL MEMORY INSTITUTE TO RELEASE JEWISH PROPERTY INFO

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[13.](#) (SBU) The Institute for National Memory began on December 16 to publish information on the confiscation of property from Jewish victims in Slovakia during World War II. The Director of the Institute told the media that the property confiscated from Slovak Jews is estimated to be 38 percent of the then-Slovak state's national wealth. Local Jewish community leaders tell us that the publication will not likely spawn a new wave of restitution claims. We have heard rumors that KDH influence in the Institute will result in a decision not to publish the identities of the wartime "aryanizers" who received property. Reportedly, this first round of publications was already delayed, allegedly due to pressures from KDH circles, who don't want to see names of their ancestors on such lists. Whether or not the names of beneficiaries are ever published, this is an important project for Slovaks to understand their history and reach reconciliation with the past.

DS APPROVES MERGER WITH SDKU

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[14.](#) (C) The center-right Democratic Party (DS) narrowly voted to approve a merger with the Slovak Democratic and Christian Union (SDKU) at its annual Party Congress on December 17. Of 168 delegates who took part, 102 voted in favor, 60 against, and six abstained. The proposal required a three-fifth majority (101 votes) to be approved. SDKU's Party Congress is expected to approve the merger in a formality vote at their own Congress in January. Kemeny, a member of DS, told us that he voted for the merger, and believes that support was wider than the vote tally indicates. He said those who voted in favor strongly supported the merger, while most who voted against were

merely expressing sentimental attachment to DS. Kemeny further stated that DS has more "thinkers" and academics than SDKU but that for reasons of finance, organization and chance these people have not been able to contribute fully because of the marginalization of DS from national politics. Merger with SDKU should allow such people (among whom he counted himself) more ability to influence Slovak society. (COMMENT: Due to poor poll numbers and a desire not to split the center-right vote, DS encouraged its voters to support SDKU just days before the 2002 Parliamentary vote. END COMMENT.)

NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS, LISKA OUT AT MOD

15. (C) Kemeny also told us that Defense Minister Liska won't remain at MoD after the 2006 election. According to Kemeny, MoD, as the best funded Ministry, should definitely go to the strongest coalition party or the "essential second" that has to be brought in to consolidate power. Kemeny didn't believe that Liska's party, SDKU, would be either of those, and further said that Liska isn't interested in staying in the position anyway. (NOTE: A November expose by Slovak daily SME (notorious for being anti-GOS) ran front-page photos of Liska playing a leisurely round of golf during a work day, a pastime that is rumored to be common for the Minister. END NOTE)

SLOVAKAID MAY HELP REDISTRICT UKRAINE

16. (SBU) Viktor Niznansky, the GOS Plenipotentiary for Public Administration Reform and President of the MESA 10 think tank, is working on expanding programs on public administration reform in the Ukraine. Niznansky, who works in partnership with the USG-funded Research Triangle Institute (RTI) and who has traveled several times to Kiev, submitted a proposal to SlovakAid for a USD 145,000 project to transfer Slovak expertise in this area to Ukraine. The project would create study tours for Ukrainian experts to come to Slovakia, organize a series of public discussions in Ukraine, create an expert team with RTI, and would coordinate with the Ukrainian Association of Towns. Ukrainian colleagues have specifically requested help with is the administrative re-districting of Ukraine, a huge challenge because of the lack of land registry (cadastre).

NGOS CONCERNED WITH INCREASED SLOVAK AID FOR BELARUS

17. (C) When asked about the reported plans to significantly increase Slovakia's aid budget for Belarus (reftel), Balazs Jarabik from Slovakia's activist Pontis Institute (who himself has been blacklisted by the Lukashenko regime) told us that he fears that the GOS plan will take money out of the pockets of NGOs. Jarabik said that MFA State Secretary Jozef Berenyi has his "heart set" on purchasing a large and expensive printing press in eastern Ukraine to be used by the Belarusian opposition. Jarabik feels this would not be the most effective use of Slovak money, as the Belarusian government has the ability to quickly intercept publications from abroad either at the border or in the mail.

HUNGARIAN PRESIDENT "SHIEST I'VE EVER SEEN"

18. (C) Presidential Foreign Affairs advisor Jan Foltin, a career diplomat, told Poloff that the recent visit of new Hungarian President Laszlo Solyom revealed the "shiest world leader" Foltin had ever met. Despite the sizable Hungarian minority in Slovakia, Foltin said that Solyom decided against doing any "large venue" events or major speeches.

SILVERMAN

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